5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
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773 574 [345] [554] demigods who are believed to have stablished the institution of building a feast house. As this couple were in the feast house during the fight, it may be assumed that they were, in a ritual sense, the feast-givers. A modern feast also always has a person occupying the office of feast leader who is charged with the ritual as well as the organisational tasks of the feast. This leader (*pondo kiari embo*) is a man acting alone, and there is no mention that his wife has any function. This is a curious discrepancy between myth and custom, especially as elsewhere in New Guinea the feast-givers are often an elderly couple (e.g. Landtman 1927).

773 574 787 I was told that the people of Hamburata, before holding a feast, always consult the stone mentioned in this tale. When the wind blows through it, it makes a whistling sound, and is the sign that a feast may be held. This may be regarded as part of the ritual precautions necessary to ensure that a feast will be successful, but it is a purely local custom. The rule that a feast may not be held in hungry times is quoted and observed by all Orokaiva informants, of whatever locality. For the purpose of my analysis it is more important than the rule concerning the stone.

773 574 This tale resembles the one previously quoted in that both are concerned with a quarrel (*isoro*). The affair at the feast was not just an ebullient sham fight (*embogo*), but a serious battle, as the term *isoro* implies. But the messages of the two myths differ, in fact they seem to contradict each other. The message of the feasting myth may be summed up as follows:

1. In original time, men might hold some kind of feast at any time, but since the days of Jomiko and Sirere such permanent amity was no longer permitted. The *isoro* ended it.
2. Feasting was henceforth permitted only after special precautions had been taken and special permission obtained from the demigod. It had become an exceptional event, for which a special feast house had to be built.
3. The main criterion for the appropriateness of a feast was abundance of food.
4. A feast could be permitted only if perfect peace reigned among the guests. If the guests quarrelled the demigod's spirit would at once depart and the feast would be ritually void or even calamitous.

773 574 728 While the *isoro* was mentioned in the myth of the stolen lashing leads to a permanent state of war, the *isoro* in the feasting myth leads only to a restriction on the occasions when feasts may properly be held, and a rule to keep the peace for the feast's duration. How can these two apparently discrepant ideas about the nature of *isoro* be reconciled? My Orokaiva informants considered the two myths as stating different aspects of the same principle. Certainly *isoro* is (or used to be, before the Australians came) an expression of mutual anger that will never end. But it may be briefly interrupted, and it is good that from time to time the anger should cease and that men should then come together for a common feast.

Williams describes these interruptions exremely well:

> The lively monotony of warfare was broken by intervals of peace. A truce-making was called *peka*, and the first emissaries were women who, born members of one tribe, had married into or been captured by the

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incontinently appropriated by her husband. The sharing of a fruit, especially a twin fruit, is a frequent practice when two people wish to establish or restore specially close bonds with one another. It constitutes a mutual pledge of friendship by agreeing to have a feast and take all the taro; they are re-establishing it by the betelnut-sharing. Thus we meet again the theme of the removal of conflict and the promoting of communion that dominates the feasting institution.

After the meeting, an invitation is sent to the chosen village. This takes the form of a small preliminary gift of betelnut and food, symbolic of the bounty to come later. The sending of this gift is called *sope ikari*. The men begin to build the feast house, a special structure which looks quite different from modern houses, but seems to correspond in almost every respect to the design of ordinary pre-contact Orokaiva houses. A style of carving used on the posts of modern feast houses seems to derive from the taro cult prevalent in the Northern District shortly after 1914 (see Chinnery and Haddon 1917, Williams 1928). The house is normally ready about a month before the feast. The ritual task of drawing down the spirits to dwell in the house and possess the offerers of sacrifice now begins. There is an all-night dance in which only initiated men participate, and at which bullroarers and flutes are used to draw the spirits. (For these instruments see Chinnery and Beaver 1915, Williams 1930: 195.) Though informants claimed that this ritual was now abandoned, I know it was enacted at Urarituru, two miles from Sivepe, in 1967. In some villages this dance is repeated (as Williams also notes, 1930: 230) from time to time before the feast, while it is also general practice to sit in front of the feast house at night and sing feast chants, which I heard one evening at Inonda. Each chant dealt either in forthright direct language or more symbolically with one of the objects necessary for a feast: meat, taro, various other vegetables and fruits, clothes, ornaments, betelnut, etc., telling them all to be plentiful. Another chant was addressed to the smoke arising from the fire inside the feast-house, telling it to draw to the village an abundance of guests. As these chants proceed at night, people busy themselves by bringing in food for the feast, preparing ceremonial clothing, and ornaments to be worn by the hosts.

The main effect of these preparations is to induce in the offerers of sacrifice a psychological identification with the *dema* of primeval time. Very little agricultural work is done in this part of the year except harvesting so that virtually all productive energy goes into ceremonial preparations. Those who are to play the role of visitors must likewise prepare, as they are usually called upon to dance, and so need to make or renovate the same paraphernalia and rehearse their dances. The change of identity that occurs when people wear ceremonial dress is strongly emphasised. Everybody must act as though this dress actually makes the wearer unrecognisable. Informants variously explain that the wearer is a wallaby, a flower, one of a number of species of birds perhaps, or an *embahi* – a spirit. Williams has described how initiands are expected to show fear of the *embahi* at initiation and be mystified by the disguise. Initiation, indeed, is the ritual whereby young people learn the dual identity of men: the everyday people one sees about the village, and the ancestral spirits which may at any time transform these familiar people into beings of primal time. The curious nasal sound of the feasting songs emphasises this new identity.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTORY

Location and facilities

131 Inonda is situated about eleven miles from Popondetta on the Oro Bay road. Up to the present, access to Popondetta has been dependent on the state of the Girua river but with the completion of a bridge later this year all-weather access will be ensured. Inonda lies within the Orokaiva culture area and is served by the Higaturu Local Government Council. Administration patrols visit the village once or twice annually.

348 [811] [198] The nearest school is about six miles away across the river at Hohota. Some children attend this school spasmodically and a few board at church schools at Popondetta or Embi. Others do not go to school at all. There is an Anglican church in the village though it is little used except when an itinerant priest happens to be passing by.

498 [366] 429 Kerosene, tobacco, sugar, salt and other household requirements are usually purchased from a small trade store about three miles distant but larger purchases are made in Popondetta. There are four main items of traditional trade which appear to follow particular routes. As betel nuts do not grow well in Inonda these are bartered or purchased from inland tribes (usually through relatives) and the lime which is chewed with them is acquired from the coast. Traditional valuables (hambo) are acquired most frequently by barter with the coastal people, but birds' feathers for making head-dresses (di) are obtained from the Managalas tribes in the mountains in exchange for dogs, money and other items. The advent of shotguns has reduced the trade in feathers to those of birds of paradise and other relatively rare species. In bygone days clay pots and wooden bowls were traded from the coast in return for feathers and other valuables but with the advent of cheap imported utensils this trade has ceased.

Physical features

133 Topography: The Inonda lands lie partly on the flood plains of the Girua and Sambogo rivers and partly in the

731 did not encourage this belief but spoke of the eruption as a natural
784 disaster. Certainly this is how Orokaiva often speak of it today,
especially when they wish to give the impression of being modern and
[777] educated. Papuans close to the Mission invariably speak of it as a
natural disaster.

A group of elderly people in Sivepe, however, produced a quite different theory when I interviewed them in 1966. They explained the eruption by the anger of the god Sumbiripa. I was told that this explanation was the generally accepted one at the time of the disaster. At Hohorita, I was likewise told that the people, at the time of the eruption, thought of the anger of Sumbiripa, though later they learned it had been a natural disaster. My Sivepe informants, however, added a refinement. Before Sumbiripa blew up, he gave two signs. To the
[787] Isivita people and those of the Sasembata district he made a sign of blue fire, which meant that these people would be saved. To the Sangara people, he gave a sign of red fire, which meant that they all died. The reason for his anger towards the Sangara people was that they used to throw hand bombs and shoot guns on the mountain. This theory has the advantage of explaining the facts more closely than the theory of the anger of the Christian God; it is easier to believe that Sumbiripa discriminated between the two tribes than that the Christian God should do so.

731 Before attempting to draw these rather various interpretations
152 together under a common theme, I shall refer briefly to F. E. Williams' extremely cogent discussion on the Orokaiva's general attitude to guilt, for which I myself collected much additional documentation. When an Orokaiva is wronged he displays a state of mind called sisiire.
[762] A person who is sisiire withdraws, refuses food, destroys his own property, may even commit suicide. By displaying his sorrow, he hopes to shame the person who has wronged him. When a person is spoken to roughly, he will feel sisiire, "ashamed." It is the normal reaction to being punished. The purpose is invariably to make the other party feel sorry for what he has done. There is something of that feeling in Father Albert's songs. The main mood is not so much contrition as the hope that the singer will make God feel sorry. This is not quite the same as what we understand by "guilt." All Belshaw's evidence suggests that the Orokaiva people after the eruption felt very sisiire.

Certainly, the eruption would be followed by a resolve not to
731 make the harsh power that brought the eruption angry again. Whether
784 this power was primarily identified with God or with Sumbiripa is
177 extremely hard to tell; it is even harder to tell whether these powers were viewed as being entirely distinct. Father Albert's testimony strongly suggests that the eruption was treated as symbolic of divine wroth as it was presented in the Bible. I have argued earlier that the Orokaiva look upon the Europeans as a new kind of culture heroes. The new dispensation brought not only new wealth and new knowledge, but also new wroth: Honckton's conquest, the world war, the eruption. It does not seem far-fetched to assume that the disaster was taken as

the assumption is that such events are read by a social group as constituting a sign or system of signs.[1]

Such an assumption is legitimate in the case of the eruption of Mount Lamington. In the view of the great majority of my Orokaiva informants, the cataclysmic explosions in the mountain and related volcanic activity were utterances communicating a message. With unimportant exceptions to which I shall refer later, informants took what may be called a religious view of the eruption (Lévi-Strauss 1962:292). They invested with personal will what we would call forces of nature (van der Leeuw 1938:chap. 9). And not only did some Being cause the eruption, but he used it as a means of communication.

Whether it is expedient to study a cataclysm such as the eruption of Mount Lamington as a system of signs emitted by the mountain depends entirely on the quality of the insights that emerge. In this case, field inquiry showed the existence of at least four systems of thought on the significance of the disaster. The adherents of these systems each expressed a different world view consistent with their view of the eruption. The existence of such ideological differences within a single society reflects conflicts which occur not only on the level of discourse but also on that of social transactions.

Such data raise several questions that merit close examination. If all Orokaiva had placed the eruption within one logically consistent framework of meaning, we might believe that we had thus discovered *the* cognitive system of the Orokaiva. In the present case we find four ideologies and explanatory frameworks all generated by the same cognitive system, in the same way that different players may use a variety of strategies while competing with one another in the same game. It then becomes our task to reconstruct this cognitive system and account for a system of interrelated ideologies generated by a sequence of events as interpreted by the cognitive system.

Another question is whether ideological discourse about the cause of the eruption deals with all or some or any of the basic conflicts identified in the society by ethnographic study and analysis. My data, dealing with the period 1951–1966, suggest that Orokaiva ideological discourse was rather selective in the conflicts with which it concerned itself. The conflicts between tribalism and regionalism and between denial and acceptance of the

his wife; the two were separated and found themselves on different crags. Sumbiripa became the first man to die, the master of the mountain within which he has since dwelt together with all Orokaiva who died subsequently."

The myth explained the shape of the mountain as it was before the eruption. The crags are not there today because they were blown apart by the eruption. The myth also explained the rumbling of the mountain and the smoke that issued from it long before the eruption of 1951. Such phenomena were regarded as signs sent by Sumbiripa. Ritual prohibitions limited access to the area close to the crater as there was a belief that Sumbiripa, if disturbed, would be angry. There was also a great fear of the dead who were supposedly dwelling in the mountain. It is believed that the dead wander about the countryside, where they may attack humans. Sumbiripa is dangerous, even if he does not erupt, because he can send out his ghosts to cause misfortune among men. The myth about Sumbiripa Kanekari hints at the possibility of an earlier eruption by the account it gives of the origin of the crags existing before 1951.

The sociological importance of the eruption lies largely in the explanations of the event developed afterward by the survivors. These explanations are related to the situation of Orokaiva society in 1951. Here we must distinguish between the situation as it appeared to the Orokaiva individual or to small refugee groups and the collective situation of the Orokaiva tribes as they collectively perceived it, in terms of the basic forces shaping their social life at that period. We may follow Burridge (1960) in identifying these basic forces with the colonial government, planters and traders, the mission, and relations within and between tribal groups.

Immediately after the eruption, the situation for individuals and small groups was dominated by fear of the mountain, grief for dead relatives, and anguish at separation from the land. The situation was influenced, moreover, by abrupt changes in social organization. The Sangara fugitives mostly fled alone or in very small groups, leaving behind their numerous dead; the Sasembata fugitives mostly fled in village groups led by their village constables. While the disaster made the Sangara leaderless, in Sasembata it merely reduced dependence on traditional leaders at the gain of the village constables whose responsibility was greatly increased. Village constables were members of village communities ap-

innovations they have brought. Those who blame the eruption on the anger of Sumbiripa regard these innovations as potentially disastrous. They argue that the eruption has proved their point; it has fortified them in their ideology. Furthermore, they have established the rule that people should not shoot on the mountain. Before the eruption this was not, to my knowledge, clearly formulated as a ritual prohibition. Today it is clearly stated though generally disregarded for reasons we shall soon learn. In justification of the rule, it should be noted that it is supported by some very cogent evidence from Sivepe villagers. It is a fact that while the eruption killed nearly all the Sangara it killed very few people of Isivita and the Sasembata districts, even though they live equally close to the crater. It is also a fact that while the Sangara had many hunting rifles in the late 1940s, the Isivita and the Sasembata districts then had few or none. I was told that Sumbiripa gave two signs just before the eruption. To the Isivita people and those of Sasembata district he made a sign of blue fire, which meant they would be saved. To the Sangara people he gave a sign of red fire, which meant they would all die.

We note that this way of explaining the disaster is concerned with a precontact social macrosystem comprising two allied groups, the Sasembata and Isivita, and their traditional enemies, the Sangara. It is not concerned with the contemporary macrosystem which is the system of relations holding between Papuans, the government, and the mission. Neither the government nor the mission enters into the explanation. Furthermore, the explanation emphasizes the tribal boundary between the Sangara people and those designated as the Waseta tribe by Williams (1940).[14] It is, in fact, the opposition between Sangara and Waseta that is stressed by this explanation.

It is precisely this opposition that makes clear the strategic and manipulative nature of the argument. Waseta are using the occasion of the eruption to score a point against their old rivals and enemies the Sangara, who deserved to be punished as retribution for earlier acts of war. The explanation ignores the fact that ninety-two Waseta also were killed in the disaster.

At this point we recognize the explanation as part of a connotative system. Any reasonable explanation of the disaster would account for all the deaths. The division of the dead into tribal or ethnic groups is logically insignificant. In a connotative system,